

Adams, Hope

From: Adams, Hope
Sent: Thursday, August 06, 2015 1:42 PM
To:
Subject: RE: Duke Energy's public process goes awry | BlueRidgeNow.com

Dear Mr. Then,

This is to acknowledge receipt of your email. I am forwarding your email to our Clerk's Office for processing. Your email will become a part of ND-2015-20-E – (Duke Energy Carolinas: Foothills Transmission and Substation Project - 45-Mile Transmission Line Between Asheville, NC, Power Plant and New Substation Near Campobello, SC) and will be posted on our website under ND-2015-20-E.

Please let me know if you should require any additional information.

Sincerely,

Hope H. Adams
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Public Service Commission of South Carolina
(803) 896-5122
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From: Duke, Daphne
Sent: Thursday, August 06, 2015 1:30 PM
To: Adams, Hope
Subject: FW: Duke Energy's public process goes awry | BlueRidgeNow.com

From: Boyd, Jocelyn
Sent: Thursday, August 06, 2015 1:12 PM
To: Duke, Daphne; Easterling, Deborah; DeSanty, Tricia
Subject: FW: Duke Energy's public process goes awry | BlueRidgeNow.com

From: Robert Then ;
Sent: Thursday, August 06, 2015 11:45 AM
To: Boyd, Jocelyn
Subject: Duke Energy's public process goes awry | BlueRidgeNow.com

more reasons to kill this project in its entirety

<http://www.blueridgenow.com/article/20150726/ARTICLES/507261005/1016/opinion04>

Duke Energy's public process goes awry

Duke Energy's attempts to inform the public about possible routes for the high-voltage power line it intends to build across the region have riled rather than relieved residents.

In announcing plans to build a new transmission line 45 to 50 miles long across Henderson and Polk counties and Upstate South Carolina, Duke officials must have known they would be stepping on a hornet's nest. Yet their attempts to quell discontent through the format of three public meetings backfired.

The format is one that public agencies sometimes use to inform the public and get input. Instead of a public hearing, in which residents stand up and speak in front of a crowd, Duke's meetings have been "informational." Hundreds of residents flocking to the meetings viewed displays of the proposed routes at different stations where they could speak with Duke representatives.

Flat Rock resident Travis Rockey, who was among those attending Thursday night's meeting at Blue Ridge Community College, called that gathering a "disaster." He said Duke "separated everybody like sheep and they don't have any answers. What they're doing is just feeding people little bits of information."

It's no surprise Duke chose this format rather than listening to angry residents rant from a podium amid shouts and applause from an audience.

"The focus of this is for us to interact with folks in the community who have started to learn about our proposal and want to ask more questions and, more importantly, offer feedback that we can use to factor into the final decision later this year which specific route has least impact on the community," Duke spokesman Ryan Mosier said at a meeting in Landrum, S.C., Tuesday night.

In fact, the N.C. Utilities Commission has the final say over where the line goes. However, the commission is unlikely to overturn Duke's choice route if the utility can show it has done its best to limit impact to private property and the environment.

At some point, public hearings must be held. The commission should schedule such hearings as soon as Duke announces its preferred route, if not before.

One problem with Duke's meetings: A number of residents who live near proposed power line routes did not get letters notifying them of that fact. Duke said it sent out letters to about 3,700 people in both Carolinas who live within 500 feet of possible routes, but missed some folks.

Tom Delfino of Bridlewood Trail in Mills River lives within 120 feet of one possible route but never got a letter. Neither did Maghan Kirkby, whose property in East Flat Rock is nears another possible route.

We'll say it again: No one who has this power line running near his home is going to be happy. But the project is part of Duke \$1.1 billion Western Carolinas modernization that will convert its coal-burning Asheville power plant to natural gas, with some solar, eliminating a major long-term source of air and water pollution in the entire region. It is not, as Laura Phillip of Greenville County, S.C., said, "for the people of Asheville."

"Why don't they use the existing facilities and enhance the facility where it is and look at greener alternatives and stop being the mafia of the energy world?" she said.

In fact, Progress Energy, which owned the Asheville plant prior to its merger with Duke, spent millions to modernize the coal plant to reduce emissions. But the plant still belches tons of soot and other pollutants, and its unlined coal ash pits are a source of groundwater pollution and a threat to the French Broad River. Only cleaning up the pits, shutting down the coal plant and replacing it with cleaner natural gas and solar will solve pollution problems. The transmission line will supply power to South Carolina, too, so it's not just for mountain residents.

The best bet, for the public and the environment, is for Duke to route the new line as much as possible along its existing rights of way and major corridors such as Interstate 26. The utility should also present an alternative for the costs to bury the lines rather than just state that would be cost-prohibitive. The public deserves to know all the costs and benefits of a project of this magnitude.